3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

To grasp the import of Haiti's problem of
270 over- population one

THE HAITIAN PEOPLE

161 433 171 511 should imagine the number of Vermonters sextupled, working with hand tools and using methods which their great-grandfathers would have considered antiquated; imagine the state with only a hundred miles of paved roads, with no harnessed water power, no substantial fortunes, no middle class; imagine the farms gullied and worn out; ninety-five per cent of the people illiterate and undernourished; the state having no industry and practically no goods imported from New York, Massachusetts, or any other part of the United States. Under such conditions the low standard of living would be readily understandable.

Haiti might also be compared with Mississippi. Less than a quarter the size of that American state, it nevertheless has a larger population. Both Haiti and Mississippi are agricultural, with few towns, although no part of Haiti now has land as richly fertile as that of the Yazoo Delta. The low standard of living of the Mississippi share-cropper, whether Negro or white, is notorious—yet he has access to a few of the perquisites of civilization, whether these be elementary schools or moving pictures; the Haitian peasant lacks even these. In America the undercurrent of feeling is that something should be, probably eventually will be, done to improve the lot of the share-cropper. Certainly there is wealth enough in the country at large to alleviate conditions where they are deemed to be socially unhealthy. Not so in Haiti: the land is poorer, the numbers even greater, the area much smaller; and there is no wealth in the country, nor enough social vision among the upper classes to deal with the relentless increase of numbers.

• 168 How conceivably might this problem be dealt with? The first answer which would occur to many Americans, namely, birth control, is out of the question at present. Expense would stand in the way of its use by people who hardly ever see money; the peasants, unable to read, suspicious of new-fangled ways, untouched by all efforts to "uplift" them, and with no educational agencies, could [795] hardly be converted to the use of contraceptives; while the Catholic Church, which until now has not had to raise its voice against birth control in Haiti, would fight any proposal to introduce it as it fought the campaign in Puerto Rico.

167 C48 Another possible answer is migration. This solution many Haitians have tried without prompting. With little money available for

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

travel, the peasants are limited in their migrations to near-by countries; specifically Cuba, which can be reached by sailing vessels, and the Dominican Republic. For many years there was a seasonal migration from Haiti to each of these neighboring countries, where wages on the sugar plantations, although low, have been better than nothing. Native Cubans and Dominicans, however, have quite understandably resented the influx of cheap labor which throws them out of work, depresses the wage scale, and thwarts efforts to improve working conditions; as the tide of Haitian immigration to the two adjacent countries increased during the 'twenties and the depression period of the 'thirties, resentment flamed into action. Murders occurred; ships to Cuba were not allowed to land; workmen were beaten and otherwise persecuted. In 1937 the Cuban dictator, Batista, expelled thousands of Haitians from the island. But the climax was reached in the autumn of the same year when the news gradually leaked out that in the Dominican Republic thousands of Haitians had been murdered in cold blood. It was estimated at that time that as many as 60,000 Haitians were living across the border; of these, certainly as many as 5,000 were butchered or drowned, and it is likely that 20,000 would be a more accurate figure if the whole truth were known.[4] In the world at the present time there seems to be no haven for penniless migrants, particularly illiterate blacks.

Even if Haiti could devise within her tiny budget a way to finance a whole series of public works, the problem of overpopulation would not be solved. Expenditures for internal improvements would merely lessen unemployment for the time being; it would not prevent the people from having large families of undernourished children.

It is easy enough to say that the problem of overpopulation could be solved by a combination of birth control, education, improvement of the soil and of agricultural techniques, introduction of manufacture, and public works projects. Each of these "solutions" is a major problem in itself, considering the limitations of the country.

4. This massacre was protested with all diplomatic vigor by Haiti. The gendarmerie, since the American Occupation the only military force in the country, numbered only 2,500 men and was no match for the military power of the Dominican Republic, so that diplomatic protest to the American nations was the only course open to President Vincent. A joint commission of the United States, Mexico, and Cuba investigated and awarded Haiti damages of $750,000, of which the Dominican government (meaning Trujillo) immediately paid $250,000, promising the rest in installments.